

# **EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

**East Providence School Committee**

**East Providence City Hall - Room 306**

**145 Taunton Avenue**

**East Providence, Rhode Island 02914**

**August 18, 2015**

## **Open Session**

**Mr. Tsonos, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.**

**Members Present: Jessica Beauchaine, Nathan Cahoon, Anthony Ferreira, Joel Monteiro, Charles Tsonos. Also present: Kim Mercer, Superintendent of Schools; Andrew Thomas, Esq.**

**The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Moment of Silence were observed.**

**Public Comment I – Agenda Items - None**

**Superintendent's Report :**

## **Facilities Report**

**Mr. Feola, Facilities Director, reported that the insurance company will be replacing six doors at Whiteknact; after looking at them, did**

not like the way they were removed and need to be replaced; in agreement to take care of it all.

Mr. Ferreira asked about Room 101 at high school; Mr. Feola explained that the demo and materials were approximately \$2300; he explained the process of the work; the entire room done and ready to use; looks good and at a lower cost than originally thought. Burman ready to roll doors in; will be placed in the wood shop at Martin Middle School to start painting them; we will know exactly which ones next week.

Discussion about the work done in Room 101.

Ms. Beauchaine asked about Riverside Middle School work on the curbing. (Mr. Feola – still waiting); Doors at Riverside Middle School; when will we see the Project Manager again; when last time anyone spoke to him. Mr. Feola will continue to try to reach him.

Mr. Ferreira asked to research contract with Burman; he has no idea what we are paying for this project; can we get that in writing along with a time line. Mr. Feola will get that information at the construction meeting next week; there is a walk through on the 24th.

Ms. Beauchaine requested that the Project Manager be asked to attend the next meeting;

Facilities Sub Committee Meeting will be held on September 14, 2015.

Mr. Tsonos asked if legal needs to get involved.

Mr. Ferreira– right now, the word from SMMA is that it is going forward; once this company starts taking doors down, we own them.

Mr. Feola – Fire Department approved all, including changes; they have to stamp them after changes.

**Ms. Beauchaine – no work during Mr. Feola’s term; he is trying to get caught up; are we paying the Project Manager; we have not seen him since walk thru at Riverside Middle School.**

**Mr. Monteiro – has asked Mr. Duarte, Athletic Director, to get together with the coaches for a “to do list” and asked him to include that on high school report; with crunch of getting schools ready, the fields need to be ready; everything is reactionary, but nothing documented or scheduled. Mr. Feola stated that we are all set with that.**

### **Personnel Report on Resignation/Leaves of Absence/Retirement**

#### **Superintendent’s Recommendations:**

##### **Leave of Absence**

**Deborah Dyer-Teacher Assistant-Martin Middle School-Effective 2015/16 School Year**

**Martha Soderlund-English Teacher-Martin Middle School- Effective 2015/16 School Year**

**Natasha Axelson-Literacy Coach-District-Effective 2015/2016 School Year**

##### **Resignations**

**Kate Lynn Sweeney-Literacy Coach-District-Effective August 11, 2015**

**April Vocke-Special Education Teacher-District-Effective August 18, 2015**

##### **Rescinded Appointment**

**Natalie Andrus-School Psychologist-District-Effective August 11,**

**2015**

## **Retirement**

**Kim Mercer, Superintendent of Schools – Effective December 30, 2015**

### **Action Items**

**Elementary Report Card – Superintendent stated there has been a lot of discussion and presenting again for approval. Mr. Cahoon - should we table until next meeting; what is impact of not approving?**

**Kim Mercer– professional development first day for elementary teachers; not sure what the concerns are; if just coding; if so, table it again; she had a conversation with Dawn August, Curriculum Coordinator, that the Committee did not want to do us A-B-C; wanted them to look at code descriptor; standards based card different; something that differs from A-B-C-D to force them to look at codes so parents would have a better idea of what is being measured; she explained the codes; the standards based report card number represents a standard; the code would tell parents what it was; new set of standards; if something else, bring the Report Card Committee back and write down the questions.**

**Mr. Monteiro– issue on standards based grading and grading a standard against a full year “doing well” he struggled with that; Curriculum Coordinator said a student could get “exceed” in first quarter.**

**Kim Mercer – original card we presented a year ago graded according to standard at end of year; new one not doing that; grades according to content taught in each quarter; her understanding was that the**

**Report Card Committee looked at grading by quarter, but once School Committee expressed concern, they did change it; broke ELA apart.**

**Ms. Beauchaine – does not really want to tell teachers what to do; if group decided, they are educators; she did research and most schools go with it; hard to find school which just grade social studies with an A; A-B-C bothers her; normal child will never get an A – “exceeds standards” very difficult at Kindergarten level; “meets” is OK; exceeds pushing it; does 100 mean exceeds standards; 1-4 looked at a lot of schools in RI; need to educate parents so they will know what the grade means; we need to put information out there; she does not want to tell teachers what to do with this.**

**Mr. Monteiro– in July we tabled it; teacher initially on that panel had not seen it; March to July when we saw it again; he feels we do not have answers to questions and he does not have comfort level with this.**

**Kim Mercer – not still N/A’s on report card**

**Mr. Monteiro – he wanted attendance and dates of meetings.**

**Kim Mercer – meetings well represented**

**Ms. Beauchaine – if tabled, teachers will not be taught about it; almost every school in RI doing it; she did not want to say this is the wrong thing to do.**

**Mr. Monteiro – received dates of meetings and the information on the original teacher panel; he thinks it is incomplete; this happened before; surprises to folks involved; he wants to know these were the people involved.**

**Mr. Ferreira – wanted to hear from teachers why they are for or against this; need to know who attended and how voted on; whose opinion do we follow; where is paperwork; this is the only way he can vote for it.**

**Patricia Barlow, Principal of Waddington explained that the Report Card Committee worked very hard representing teachers across the district; shared information in the teachers' rooms with others; teachers wanted a tool to work with and worked hard at that; they wanted something better than A-B; if piece of standard not taught at that time, not able to put in N/A; teachers may appreciate being able to get professional development after school and get credit or use faculty or common planning time; or adopt as pilot for one year; not good idea to delay into school year; teachers are familiar with this now.**

**Mr. Monteiro – heard that teachers need a tool; take it or leave it, better than what you have” take it or nothing; he did not want teachers to feel like this or nothing; we knew this since last year; plenty of time to present this; now in August we need to hurry up and approve, negligible at best. Motion to table by Mr. Monteiro.**

**Mr. Cahoon – this is for child and parent to know how they are doing; Engineering class in physics – what so complicated in elementary that is different from High School; why completely different assessment when back to Middle School and High School, all use A-B-C grading; what is our stated objective to use this report card; he did not see how to get information to parents, given our track record in the past; questions on how to exceed standards; how will we get**

**4's. This is what our policy says; we have not changed it; done for consistency K-12; probably not as complicated as what is going on at middle school and high school; he does not know why we would do different than colleges and universities or how it will help communication to parents.**

**Discussion about the panel and if any parents, teachers, and administrators were on the panel.**

**Motion to table already made by Mr. Monteiro, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 4-1; Ms. Beauchaine voted nay.**

**Mr. Tsonos asked if the School Committee wished to put a deadline into this year; Mr. Ferreira—needs one to support it.**

**Pam Watson, Grade 5 teacher, spoke; she was not on the committee; Common Core mandated to teach and align curriculum properly; we need a tool like this with all due respect; grading students, there is criteria to be fulfilled and it was consistently then an A; children quite versed in this ; K has basic concepts like 1-10, she was never told take it or leave it; this was never crammed down he throat; what works for the system as a whole; she agrees with Mr. Cahoon about consistency K-12 with A-B-C-D grading; have a syllabus on what is expected to grade students; not really that different in that respect; she did not commit to this committee because of other tasks, but felt this is something we have to do; not told by Superintendent, but the state. Mr. Tsonos stated this topic will be on the next agenda.**

**Personnel Appointments/Recalls**

**Superintendent's Personnel Recommendations:**

## **Personnel Appointments**

**Elizabeth Pacheco-Guidance Counselor-Riverside Middle School-Effective August 31, 2015**

**Kristen Taylor-Social Worker-District- Effective August 31, 2015**

**Donna Hallal-Speech Pathologist-District- Effective August 31, 2015**

**Jacqueline John-Social Worker-District- Effective August 31, 2015**

**Raunisio Oliveira-Boys Head Soccer Coach – High School-Effective 2015-16 School Year**

## **Recalls**

**Brian Kelly-Social Worker-District-Effective 2015-16 School Year**

**Kelly Giorgi-Kindergarten Teacher-Waddington-Effective 2015-16 School Year**

**Edward DeArruda-4/5 Music Teacher-High School-Effective 2015-16 School Year**

**Jennifer Cook-Special Education Teacher-Martin Middle School**

**Motion to approve by Mr. Cahoon, seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0.**

**Secretarial Job Descriptions – Superintendent Mercer presented 29 job descriptions completed by former H/R Director and vetted by the President of the Secretarial Association – EPESA.**

**Mr. Monteiro– same as last time they were presented; in reference to websites, his wife got a call from the Principal about the website; not**



pushing it on anyone; no one obligated by job description for community updates in any of our schools; does not know who does it at the schools.

Ms. Beauchaine asked if we could pay a stipend to a person to do that work.

Mr. Monteiro – does not do the work during the work day; doing it because asked to do it, not insisting on secretaries doing it; community website at the end of the day and no one is responsible for it.

Ms. Beauchaine – shares his opinion on it; we need to figure out how to get this work done in order to get information out.

Mr. Monteiro – asked Principal Barlow to respond; this is a key part of how we work with our families and we leave it up to volunteers.

Mrs. Barlow said there is stress every year to get someone comfortable and who desires to do it and to make sure the information is accurate; she has had teachers who got all on board with information; she cannot take on website work; would have to ask her secretary to be a part of that duty; secretaries' association has disagreed; she would like it resolved as this is not a realistic thing to ask of her; if not in job description, she will not be able to evaluate an individual on it.

Discussion about Skyward program which is more time consuming than PowerSchool;

Kim Mercer – regarding Skyward, there is a learning curve and additional reports for RIDE who extracts information from it;

**secretaries have to put information in; there are more reports. Motion to approve by Ms. Beauchaine, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 3-2 to approve; Mr. Cahoon and Mr. Monteiro voted nay.**

**Home School Requests – Motion to approve by Mr. Cahoon, seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0.**

**Human Resources Deconsolidation – Superintendent Mercer recommended that the schools deconsolidate from the city; she felt it was necessary because School Department has a different set of laws and guidelines that have to be followed; lot of work for one person to know; City Charter and Title 16 of RI General Laws for schools; in the best interest of the School Department to have someone committed to the schools.**

**Mr. Cahoon supported the Superintendent's recommendation about state law and Title 16 that the School Department needed to follow, which is much different than the city; in our best interest to deconsolidate.**

**Mr. Paul Luba, Financial Advisor stated that although he is in favor of consolidation, in this situation does not work; he felt that at this time, it was in the best interest of the School Department and the city.**

**Approval of Job Descriptions**

**Director of Human Resources – Motion by Mr. Monteiro to approve, seconded by Mr. Cahoon. Vote 5-0.**

**Part-time Bookkeeper CTC – Ms. Beauchaine noted that the original date was April; if head of the CTC requested this, we have no more information today than last time. Mr. Ferreira – meeting after meeting not getting information we need to make informed decisions; someone should explain why.**

**Mr. Monteiro – at next meeting, Mr. Tsonos should ask the Superintendent if all documents are available since the last time; that's how that works.**

**Mr. Ferreira– effects educational system; does not understand why information not coming forward; tabled 5-0; but holds up educational system**

**Kim Mercer – normally she send out information the next day after a meeting if it is requested; did any one ask for it.**

**Mr. Monteiro – reason we tabled it was for more information.**

**JR Accountant/Benefits- Linda Dykeman, Deputy Finance Director, recommended this position which would report to her.**

**Mr. Cahoon would support this position if it would help take the burden off her.**

**Mr. Monteiro – felt that Ms. Dykeman has a lot credibility and with her name behind it, he would support it. Discussion regarding qualifications and skills; discussion about educational level.**

**Linda Dykeman – could put back in that a BA is preferred.**

**Mr. Ferreira – felt that Linda Dykeman does a phenomenal job; she attends every meeting; if she needs this for her department, then he would make a motion to support it and the way it was put together; seconded by Mr. Cahoon. Vote 5-0.**

## **Public Comment II – Non Agenda Items**

**Parent from Silver Spring asked for an update on playground and a date of completion.**

**Mr. Feola reported that there is a need to have a fence put out there and only have a backhoe there when needed.**

**Ms. Beauchaine – this is a city project through a grant; we are not getting information; going with other company.**

**Mr. Feola – they are waiting for first phase check to order playground set; funds being managed by planner.**

**Mr. Ferreira - should instruct Mr. Feola through legal to put a fence up there so children will not be hurt; there is a hole in the middle of the field. Motion by Mr. Ferreira to do so.**

**Mr. Cahoon– we would be providing it; our request to city would be done as soon as possible.**

**Andrew Thomas – cautioned this is a non-agenda item; cannot act on it; Mr. Cahoon – this is a dangerous situation, school to open in a week; willing to take a chance, he seconded the motion.**

**Mr. Feola will meet with Mr. Coutu of the Highway Department and send out a note to School Committee members.**

**Parent asked if no fence on the first day; who to call. Superintendent Mercer confirmed that there will be a fence placed at that location.**

**Mr. Dwyer, former teacher, retired in 2008 after 32 years of service; he spoke about the contract negotiations and arbitration at that time; battled over six weeks, 20 retired teachers told under the old contract that they would receive individual health insurance for two years until 65 and that they could purchase a family plan if wanted; same with Delta Dental; they would get individual plan and could purchase family plan. School Committee at that time told 20 teachers who retired under that contract that they would receive this benefit. In June of 2015, they received a letter saying that this benefit language would not be followed any longer and that they could not purchase a family plan for health insurance or Delta dental; this was only sent to some retirees; they were advised that the ending date for termination of these benefits would be 8/31/15; he provided School Committee members with a copy of the letter signed by Kathleen Waterbury, Human Resources Director. The School Committee had no knowledge of the letter.**

**Mr. Dwyer stated that on July 1st he received a letter about continuing insurance and how much medical would cost; this came instead; he called Val Lawson and Linda Leclair at NEA; told everything would end in 13 days; took over four hours; spoke to Leah in H/R who was the rudest person with an attitude and yelling that this was not in the contract and would be ending now; he was not able to talk to H/R Director; others had same problem; she looked at this year's contract and applied it to that contract; he and others were**

**forced to retire at that time and this was promised to them under their contract.**

**Mr. Monteiro – heard of this on Sunday, not aware of any interaction; we are expected to discuss in executive session; the issue is being corrected; all should be brought up to date tomorrow.**

**Mr. Thomas, legal counsel, spoke to Mr. Dwyer and he understands the urgency; School Committee not aware of this; Kathleen Waterbury, H/R Director, signed off on the letter.**

**Mr. Thomas said he had different versions of the issue; he has been in contact with NEA Legal Counsel, John DeCubellis, who knows about urgency of this case and will go to Superior Court to seek an injunction to stop termination of health benefits; this involves collective bargaining contracts and should not be discussed in public; Mr. Thomas believed this could be resolved.**

**Ms. Beauchaine – apologized to all affected and hoped for resolution.**

**Mr. Cahoon – qualifications of H/R with collective bargaining offered as Exhibit A**

**Announcements –Opening of School on September 1, 2015; teachers report on August 31, 2015 at 8:00AM for Convocation at the High School.**

**Mr. Cahoon asked about schedules; Kim Mercer – sent to Post for publication and on website; start times 8:40AM – 2:45PM elementary; 7:55AM-2:15PM Middle Schools and High School 7:25AM to 1:45PM; no longer extended days. Early Learning Center at Waddington has two sessions: 8:40-11:10AM and 12:15 – 2:45PM. Bus routes will be out next week; questions about high school schedules not being**

available; Superintendent responded that it stemmed from an issue rolling over information; will be corrected soon.

Motion by Mr. Cahoon to move to executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel – R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1); Collective Bargaining R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2); Litigation//Pending Litigation-R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2); seconded by seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0.

School Committee returned to open session. Report Executive Session Votes - Mr. Cahoon reported one vote on a personnel matter; unanimous vote 5-0; Memorandum of Understanding and resignation of one individual. Motion to seal the minutes of the executive session and adjourn, seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Nathan Cahoon, Clerk of the Committee